

Family Time: Instant Protection Against Dangerous Influences

Family time is a necessity for those wishing to build happy and healthy families. Parents that take time out to eat as a family, play, read, and talk together, teach children that they matter, that relationships are worth nurturing, and that strong family bonds breed success.

Setting aside blocks allocated for family time can be very difficult for busy families. By the time everyone is home from work, school, sports, and other outside activities people are tired, playing a board game seems like the least important item on the to-do list. However, playing a board game, metaphorically, is the most important item to cross off of the list.

Family time is valuable time when parents can take time out to observe their children, follow their children, hug and kiss them, encourage, guide, and laugh. Family time is when children feel comfortable opening up to their parents; this is a time when the mood is relaxed and children feel supported, valued and loved.

Eat together

Studies have shown that the family activity with the greatest positive impact on children, is sitting down together to dinner each evening. Benefits for children include learning patience, (family members should wait for everyone to be served before eating and remain at the table until everyone is through), sitting quietly and calmly to eat, and listening attentively and participating in the conversation. If an evening meal is impossible to schedule, families can find a different meal to gather, a fun idea is to set the table later in the evening when everyone is home, and have dessert together.

Children should be included in meal preparation, setting the table, and clean-up. Although table manners must be taught and reinforced, mealtime should be a pleasant experience with a focus on togetherness. Quick behavioral reminders will reinforce good manners and then conversation can be resumed. Parents should choose to be in a good mood and not let the day's issues weigh down the meal. After all, this is family time!

Creative planning can make the evening meal easier to put on the table and clean up afterwards. Simple meals, and meals prepared in advance and frozen, are good ways to ease the evening scramble and help keep the focus on family time, not on cooking and cleanup. Instead of spending an hour cleaning the kitchen after the meal, simple meals free up some time in the evening for togetherness.

Shut off the television and the computer

Shutting off the television in the evening helps to place the focus on the people in the house instead of the strangers on the screen. The evening hours spent interacting as a family instead of staring at the television will benefit everyone greatly and will help create warm and lasting memories.

Shutting off the television and the computer eliminates the risk that children will be exposed to damaging levels of violence and sexual content. Experts claim that violence and sexual imagery negatively change the brain chemistry of children, resulting in permanent changes in the brain's wiring.

Set a relaxed mood

Bathe young children and put them in their pajamas. Put on some light music that isn't jarring or offensive, this often cues a little impromptu dancing from children, always good for a laugh. No arguing, bickering, or crabbiness. Family time should be warm, joyful and happy. Parents should be demonstrative and giving, snuggle, hug, and kiss the kids and each other. Family time like this is ideal for modeling loving, kind behavior.

Find fun games and activities

The nature of children is to be fun loving and flexible and open to many ideas. Coloring, board games, guessing games, acting, playing with dolls or cars, and reading are all fun things to do together. Allow children to help set the evening agenda. One idea based on the Montessori principal of learning suggests observing the child and leading by following the child.

There are other opportunities during the day for family time

The evening is not the only option for family time. Parents should seek out other times to be together. Take the kids on the morning and afternoon dog walk, invite them to join in on gardening, ask them to help wash the car or help with the laundry. It is probably true that activities will be completed slower with kids as helpers, but their happiness far outweighs the inconvenience.

Parents who zone out each evening in front of the television or computer for hours and hours rob children of the necessary family time that they need. It is stingy of parents to choose to channel or web surf over spending time with their kids. In a blink of an eye the kids will be up and out of the house and parents will have the rest of their lives to stare blankly at a screen, alone.

Making a conscious effort to spend quality family time together is vital to the health and welfare of children. Children do not thrive if parents don't interact with them daily. When parents choose to have kids, they automatically choose to sacrifice their time to raise their kids. Family time is a parenting tool which helps to regulate the content that children are exposed to and introduce healthier activities. Developing strong relationships with children also will build bonds that last a lifetime.

About the Author

Elena Neitlich is owner of [Moms On Edge](http://www.momsonedge.com) at <http://www.momsonedge.com>. When you're tired of battling with potty training, bedtime and other behavioral issues, find clever [parenting tools and products](#) proven to quickly help solve the most common parenting challenges in creative, fun ways.

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